Understanding Trauma



Defining Trauma

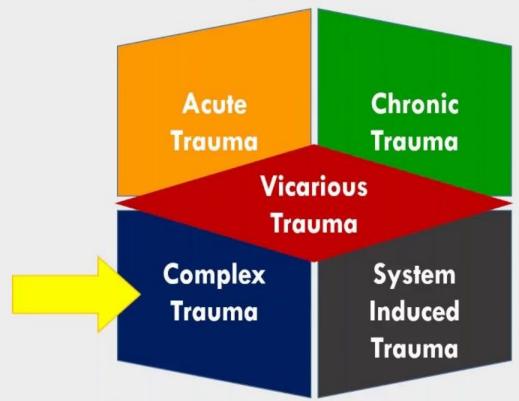
The word Trauma carries a range of meanings.

The literature is saturated with definitions of trauma. For a long time healthcare professionals have been debating with the question of what exactly trauma constitutes: consequently definitions have evolved over a number of years.

- The American Psychological Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual defines a traumatic event, as one in which a person experiences, witnesses, or is confronted with actual or threatened death or serious injury, or threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others.
 An inescapably stressful event that overwhelms people's existing coping
- mechanisms. (Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995)
 Psychological trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or of enduring conditions in which the individual's ability to integrate his or her
- emotional experience is overwhelmed (ie his or her ability to stay present, understand what is happening, integrate the feelings, and make sense of the experience), or the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity. (Pearlman & Saakvitne) Peichl (2007)

 Trauma as a toxic condition, a mixture of intense anxiety, absolute
- Trauma as a toxic condition, a mixture of intense anxiety, absolute helplessness and a loss of control. (Peichl 2007)

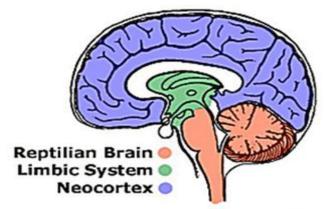
Trauma Vocabulary



Big T and Little T

- Big T identified as a catastrophic event such as rape, abuse, serious injury, unexpected death
- Little T events that exceed our capacity to cope and cause a disruption in emotional functioning. Divorce, financial issues, conflicts, abrupt move, legal issues.
- Chronic less about about one identifiable event, recurring painful situations and experiences.
- Acute highly identiful event.
- Complex Trauma
- DEVELOPMENTAL TRAUMA- Can start in Utero, lack of bonding and attachment, neglect, abuse, separation, instability, Domestic Violence

Trauma & Brain Development



Typical Development

Cognition

Social/ Emotional

Regulation

Survival

Developmental Trauma

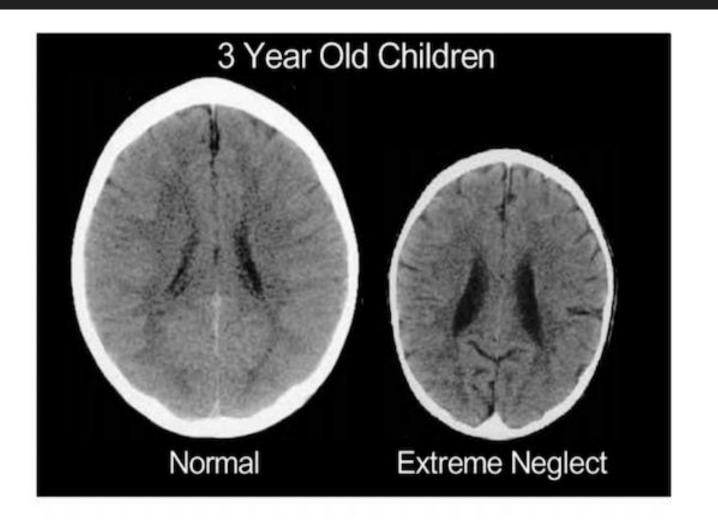
Cognition

Social/ Emotional

Regulation

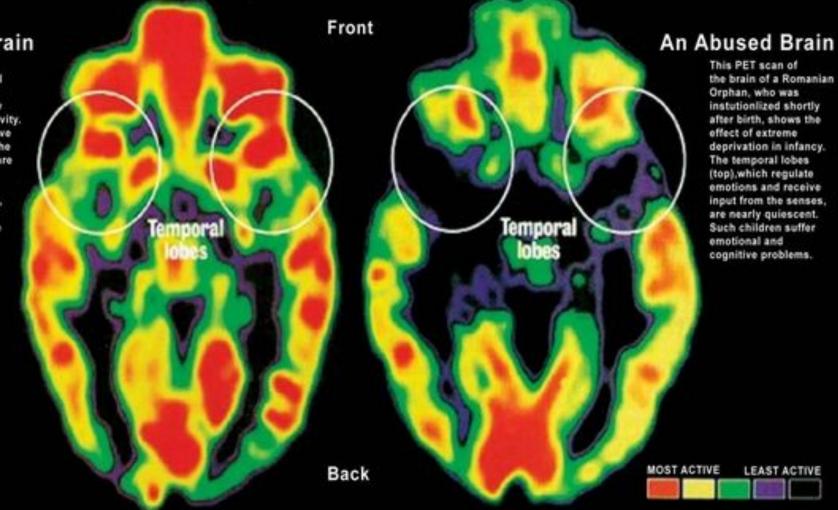
Survival





Healthy Brain

This PET scan of the brain of a normal child shows regions of high (red) and low (blue and black) activity. At birth, only primitive structures such as the brain stem (center) are fully functional; in regions like the temporal lobes (top), early childhood experiences wire the circuits.



Typical Symptoms

Physical Signs of Trauma:

- Unexplained sensations including pain
- Sleep and eating disturbances
- Low energy
- Increased arousal

Emotional Symptoms:

- Depression and fear
- Anxiety and panic
- Numbness, irritability, anger
- Feeling out of control
- Avoidance

Cognitive:

- Distraction
- Decrease in concentration
- Memory lapse
- Difficulty with decisions

Behavioral Signs & Effects:

- Compulsion
- Substance abuse
- Eating disorders
- Impulsive, self-destructive behavior
- Dissociation Changes in interpersonal relationships:
- Isolation, avoidance, social withdrawal
- Sexual disruption
- Feeling threatened, hostile, argumentative

Re-experiencing the trauma:

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Intrusive thoughts
- Sudden emotional and or physical flooding

How Trauma Impacts Four Different Types of Memory

EXPLICIT MEMORY

SEMANTIC MEMORY

What It Is

The memory of general knowledge and facts.

Example

You remember what a bicycle is.

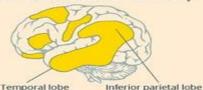


How Trauma Can Affect It

Trauma can prevent information (like words, images, sounds, etc.) from different parts of the brain from combining to make a semantic memory.

Related Brain Area

The temporal lobe and inferior parietal cortex collect information from different brain areas to create semantic memory.



EPISODIC MEMORY

What It is

The autobiographical memory of an event or experience – including the who, what, and where.

Example

You remember who was there and what street you were on when you fell off your bicycle in front of a crowd.



How Trauma Can Affect It

Trauma can shutdown episodic memory and fragment the sequence of events.

Related Brain Area

The hippocampus is responsible for creating and recalling episodic memory.



EMOTIONAL MEMORY

What It Is

The memory of the emotions you felt during an experience.

Example

When a wave of shame or anxiety grabs you the next time you see your bicycle after the big fall.



How Trauma Can Affect It

After trauma, a person may get triggered and experience painful emotions, often without context.

Related Brain Area

The amygdala plays a key role in supporting memory for emotionally charged experiences.



PROCEDURAL MEMORY

What It Is

IMPLICIT MEMORY

The memory of how to perform a common task without actively thinking

Example

You can ride a bicycle automatically, without having to stop and recall how it's done.



How Trauma Can Affect It

Trauma can change patterns of procedural memory. For example, a person might tense up and unconsciously alter their posture, which could lead to pain or even numbness.

Related Brain Area

The striatum is associated with producing procedural memory and creating new habits.



Striatum

Type of trauma we don't typically talk about

- Sibling Abuse
- Verbal Abuse
- Trauma From a Psychiatric Hospitalization
- Trauma From Mental Health Providers
- Trauma From Years of Misdiagnosis
- Childbirth Trauma/Mother and Child
- Trauma in a School Setting
- Trauma From Homelessness
- Historical Trauma

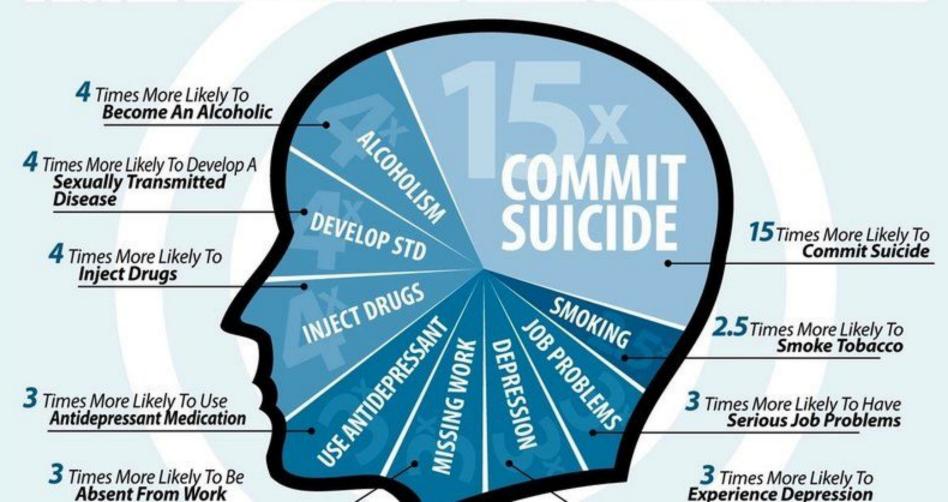
- Trauma From Homelessness
- Trauma From a Strict Religious Upbringing
- Gaslighting
- Secondary Trauma
- Medical Trauma
- Emotional Neglect
- In Utero Drug/ Alcohol Exposure
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Attachment and Bonding

Symptoms Not Typically Recognized

- Increased Cortisol Levels
- Loss of neurons on the hippocampus
- Enlarged Amygdala
- Peptic Ulcers
- Autoimmune Disorders
- Homeostasis Disruption
- Psychosomatic Disorders
- Cognitive delays

- Dysregulated AutonomicNervous System
- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Hypertension
- Muscle Loss
- Cold Sores
- Inflammation and swelling

PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:





70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives. This equates to approximately 223.4 million people

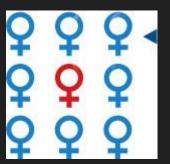


An estimated 8% of Americans – 24.4 million people – have PTSD at any given time. That is equal to the total population of Texas.

Up to 20% of these people go on to develop PTSD. As of today, that equates to approximately 44.7 million people who were or are struggling with PTSD.



An estimated one out of every nine women develops PTSD, making them about twice as likely as men.



A New Understanding of Trauma

"I define trauma as an experience, or pattern of experiences, that impairs the proper functioning of the person's stress-response system, making it more reactive or sensitive." (Dr. Bruce Perry)

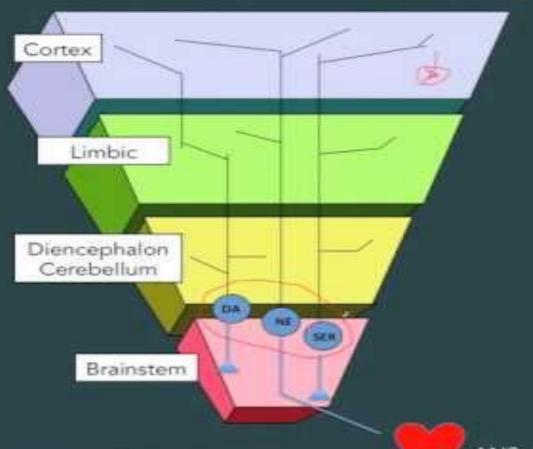
Trauma affects the developing brain and body and alters the body's stress response mechanisms. New research can correlate the relationship among traumatic events, impaired brain function and immune system responses. Trauma induces powerlessness, fear, hopelessness and a constant state of alert, as well as feelings of shame, guilt, rage, isolation and disconnection.

All trauma shares certain elements in common such as that it was unexpected, the person was unprepared, and there was nothing the person could do to prevent it from

happening.

Trauma is the experienced emotional and physiological aftermath of an event(s), whether it is big "T" or little "t." It is not the event OR memories that determines whether something is traumatic to someone, but the individual's experience of the event. It is how an individual experiences the event that will determine the level of ongoing symptoms after the trauma.

Efferent Distribution of Primary Regulatory Networks



Reflective Cognition Concrete Cognition

Affiliation Attachment/ Reward Sexual Behavior

Emotional Reactivity

Motor Regulation

Arousal

Appetite/Satiety

Sleep

Blood Pressure

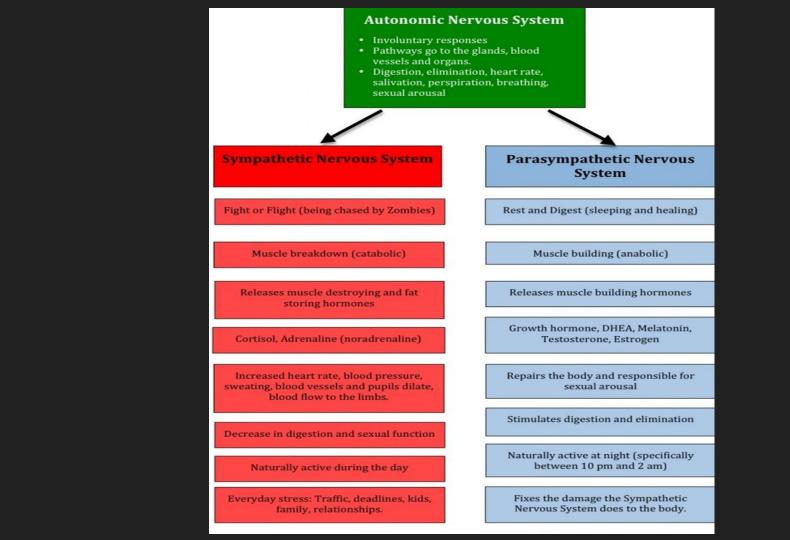
Heart Rate

Body Temperature

ANS - body

"We now understand that trauma's imprint is both psychological and somatic. Traumatic memories are stored somatically (relating to or affecting the body) in the nervous system long after the events are over, the body continues to respond as if danger were ever present."

~ Janina Fisher ~



How The Vagus Nerve Affects Organ Systems

Heart

Decreases heart rate, vascular tone.

Liver

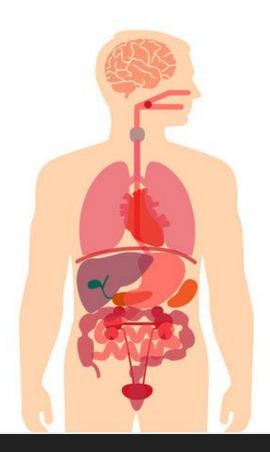
Regulates insulin secretion and glucos homeostasis in the liver.

Gut

Increases gastric juices, gut motility, stomach acidity.

Inflammation

Suppresses inflammation via the cholinergic anti-inflammatory pathway



Brain

Helps keep anxiety and depression at bay. Opposes the sympathetic response to stress.

Mouth

Taste information is sent via three cranial nerves, one of which is the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is needed for the gag reflex, swallowing, and coughing.

Blood Vessels

Decreases vascular tone, lowering blood pressure.

What does a slinky have to do with trauma?

Now What?

Healing Trauma

Be Willing to Heal

Get Moving/Rhythmic

Accept Support/Relationships

Self Regulation

Taking Care of Your Health

Seek Professional Help



What is Trauma Informed Care/Approach

A trauma-informed perspective does not ask clients "What is wrong with you?" but instead, "what happened to you?" It connects a person's behavior to their trauma response rather than isolating their actions to the current circumstances and assuming a character flaw. A trauma-informed system also focuses on how services are delivered, and how service-systems are organized

6 Key Components

Safety
Trustworthiness
Peer Support
Collaboration
Empowerment

Cultural, Historical and Gender issues

Tips for being more Trauma Informed

Connecting with your clients

Establish a trusting relationship

Transparency

Reliability

Predictability

Listen and give your clients a voice/choice

Be authentic and interested

Patience

Language

Strength based approach

Self Awareness/secondary trauma

Creating A Trauma Informed Physical Environment

Front staff Lighting

Seating

Noise level

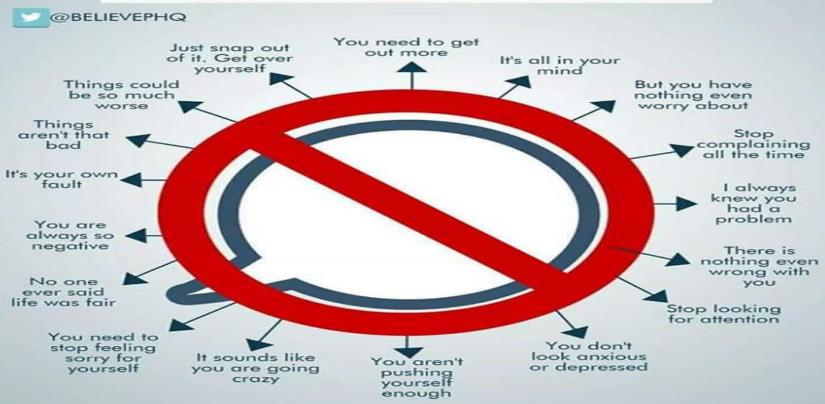
Offering coloring/ doodling tools

Smells

Meeting in unconventional places

Have a blanket available

WHAT NOT TO SAY TO A FRIEND EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM



http://www.traumainformedlaw.org/resource

http://www.hationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/trainingta/trauma-informed-legal-advocacy-tila-project/

http://justicespeakersinstitute.com/the-trauma-informed-courtroom/?utm_campaign=shareaholic&utm_medium=facebook&utm_source=socialnetwork

https://beaconhouse.org.uk/

THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE BRAIN, MIND, AND BODY IN THE HEALING OF TRAUMA



